



U.S. Agency for International Development

Bureau for Global Health

SUCCESS STORIES

HIV/AIDS

South African Widow Relies on Soweto AIDS Project to Care for Grandchildren

GRANNY NONO, A 53-YEAR-OLD South African widow, has seen her share of death and suffering. Having lost a husband to alcoholism 11 years ago, she confronted grief a second time last year as AIDS claimed the life of her eldest daughter at age 32. Now responsible for the care of two orphaned grandchildren, Granny relies on the Hope WorldWide Soweto AIDS Project, which is sponsored by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

Granny's daughter, Mpho, never told her mother she had HIV. When sores started to appear on Mpho's legs and she began to stumble, Granny suspected Mpho had been drinking too much at parties. Granny learned of the AIDS diagnosis only a month before her daughter's death, when a doctor explained why Mpho had been acting strangely.

When Mpho's husband abandoned the family after the funeral, Granny took in her two orphaned granddaughters, 9-year-old Lerato ("Love") and 13-year-old Karabo ("Answer"). "I didn't understand much about AIDS then," she confessed. Confused and destitute, Granny worried about sharing her small, four-room house with two additional family members. Two other adult daughters and a 6-year-old granddaughter were already living in the house, and the entire family eked out a living on \$20 a month that Granny earned from two tenants who lived on her property.

Two days after Mpho's funeral, a knock on Granny's door brought relief. A neighbor invited Granny to visit her workplace—the Hope WorldWide Clinic, known outside of South Africa as the Soweto AIDS Project. The project provides counseling to persons living with HIV/AIDS and their family members to help them cope physically and emotionally, and supplies food and clothing to families in need. As a result of that initial visit, Granny's grandchildren now have nutritious foods such as vegetables, cornmeal, and chicken, and the support of caring adults within their own community.

"I'm so grateful," Granny said. "Now I am learning about AIDS and have told my grandchildren what AIDS did to their mother. They were afraid at first, but we are learning together to make sense of this thing."

Mpho's daughters now join their grandmother in weekly visits to the Soweto AIDS Project, and Granny is determined to protect their future. She is equally passionate about confronting the stigma surrounding the epidemic threatening her country: "I don't want to hide the truth about AIDS. I want the world to know what AIDS can do to families."

South Africa has more people living with AIDS than any other country in the

*"I want the world to know what AIDS can do to families."
— Granny Nono, a South African widow caring for two grandchildren orphaned by AIDS*



Photo courtesy of Hope WorldWide

Two South African children served by the Soweto AIDS Project.

1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC
20523-3600

www.usaid.gov

world. Approximately 250,000 South Africans died of AIDS in 2002—a figure expected to surpass one million by 2008. USAID's three-year partnership with Hope WorldWide allocates \$2.3 million for HIV/AIDS assistance in six locations.

South Africa, October 2003